



EmployeeUPDATE

Our Mission: To serve the people of North Carolina by enabling individuals, families and communities to be healthy and secure, and to achieve social and economic well-being.

A month publication for employees of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

Gus brings smiles to patients at hospital

Gus may share the same name as a cattle-rousing cowboy from Lonesome Dove, but this Gus is a 4-year-old yellow Labrador retriever and his passion is making people smile.

When Deborah B. Atkinson was looking for volunteering opportunities last year, she wanted to include her dog. After a friend mentioned an organization that trained therapy dogs, Deborah, section chief for financial policy in the Division of Medical Assistance, enrolled Gus in obedience classes leading to certification as a therapy dog.

Deborah and Gus attended classes at the Bon-Clyde Learning Center in Sanford where Gus learned basic obedience as well as specific skills for maneuvering and behaving around hospital equipment. "I was worried that he didn't have enough training before we started the classes, but training doesn't have to start when the dogs are young. They just need dogs with good dispositions," Deborah said.

Therapy dogs certified by national and local groups are qualified to visit hospitals, nursing homes, and facilities serving people with developmental disabilities and mental illnesses. Studies have shown that dogs can promote healing and improve the quality of life for patients and residents of these institutions.

During a recent visit to WakeMed in Raleigh, Gus brightened faces as he made his way through the lobby. He sat. He was a people magnet. A half dozen people walked out of their way to pet him, each one smiling. A group of Girl Scouts descended on him, each reaching out to pet his head or shake his paw. "Aw, he's so cute," one said.



Deborah Atkinson and Gus greet Horace Daniels at WakeMed.

"C'mon Gus," Deborah commanded. Gus left the lobby group and headed to work in the rehabilitation wing. There he sniffed and looked around, spotting patients in the hallway and wagging his tail in greeting. Before leading Gus to a welcoming patient Deborah would ask if it was okay for Gus to approach. "Oh, yes," said one. Gus approached, wagged and sat.

Horace Daniels of Zebulon sat in a wheelchair and held out a hand for Gus to sniff. "I love dogs," said Daniels, who said he owns two pit bulls and a wolf. Daniels petted Gus and scratched behind his ears, shook hands and fondled his muzzle. "This dog is spoiled," he said to anyone who would listen.

"He sure is," Deborah agreed.

Gus was certified by Therapy Dogs International, one organization that sets requirements for therapy dogs. For TDI, dogs must pass the American Kennel Club Canine

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Secretary's Letter

"Eat Smart, Move More" **campaign message worth heeding**

Dear DHHS Employee,

It is springtime – with the sun shining and longer days beckoning, now is the time to get active.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently announced that obesity will soon overtake tobacco as the leading cause of preventable death. Duke University just published a report that our children are facing an epidemic of obesity. More than a third of North Carolina's children are obese or at risk of obesity and almost a quarter of adults are obese. Obesity-related medical expenses in North Carolina stood at \$2.1 billion in 2003. When lost productivity is factored in, that figure doubles.

The Division of Public Health's "Eat Smart, Move More" campaign is working to change all of that. The statewide initiative promotes increased physical activities and healthy eating.

There are lots of ways that you can be healthy in the workplace:

- Instead of going to a sit-down restaurant for lunch, pack a healthy picnic and take a walk with co-workers.
- Don't drive to lunch – walk to and from lunch.
- Eat a power lunch – Eat lean meat like turkey on wholegrain bread with fresh vegetables.
- Instead of snacking on simple carbohydrates like candy, try fresh fruit.



The "Eat Smart, Move More" web site at <http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/> has lots of great information to help you be healthier. Bookmark this page and use it as a foundation for a healthy lifestyle.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Carmen Hooker Odom". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Carmen Hooker Odom



Jalil Isa

¡Salud y Saludos!

Latino gangs: a result of isolation

The first weekend in March marked the ninth time the non-profit El Pueblo, Inc. has held its 'FORO Latino.' This two-day event, held over a weekend at Meredith College in Raleigh this year, drew more than 500 people to learn about current issues affecting the Hispanic community of North Carolina.

Some of the workshops presented at the event educated participants about folk healing, lead poisoning, federal health programs and policies, Latinos and the public school system, and Latino gangs in North Carolina. There were also some broader workshops for those getting started in working with this burgeoning community. For those more knowledgeable about the state of North Carolina's Hispanic community, there were some other sessions tailored to specific issues of concern.

El Pueblo – the organization that, in addition to this conference, also puts on the yearly *FIESTA* del Pueblo and other community events and workshops – is a statewide advocacy group working to improve the lives of Latinos across North Carolina. The organization also promotes leadership, and has an entire program devoted to youth.

Throughout the weekend, students from across the state had a chance to participate in their own version of FORO including workshops specially designed to provide them information on topics they felt were relevant to their lives.

I was privileged to be part of the committee that helped organize the event for adults. I pushed to include the workshop looking at Latino gangs in our state – discussed at FORO. This session attracted law enforcement officers from Wake and Mecklenburg counties to explain how gangs are proliferating in North Carolina.

I was unaware that authorities had identified more than a dozen distinct gangs...just in Wake County! As often occurs, these problems seem to first hit Charlotte and then move toward Raleigh. The good news is that the various departments are trying to now cope with the problem.

As I see it, the saddest part of this entire issue is the sense of belonging that seems to be so paramount in the lives of teenagers. Unfortunately, Hispanic kids are often isolated in school and frequently must also face language barriers that further exclude them from the bigger group.

As a result, they turn to gangs as a support group. But as we all know, and I saw first-hand growing up in Miami, these groups are dangerous options for teens looking to fit in. Not only do these groups try to initiate kids as young as nine, but the very initiation can be the beginning of the end: many gangs require the hopeful wannabe to commit a crime before being accepted to the group. Several armed robberies and shootings statewide have been confirmed to be part of a gang initiation.

If the folks in Los Angeles have been unable to come up with the magic answer for their decades-old problem, I sure as heck don't pretend I'll have any answers to this problem which is bound to increase in North Carolina. But I do hope that folks reading this will teach others, and especially our youth, how crucial it is to be tolerant...and how important it is to set a tone of condemning prejudicial views. It is these negative views that can ultimately harvest the resentment in individuals who then go out and take actions that negatively affect all of us.

DHHS, DOT share United We Ride State Leadership Award

The N.C. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the N.C. Department of Transportation (DOT) recently received a State Leadership Award for excellence in coordinating transportation services for older adults, people with disabilities and low-income families.

The award was presented by U.S. Transportation Secretary Norman Y. Mineta and Federal Transit Administrator Jennifer Dorn at a congressional reception held in Washington, D.C. in February. The reception was held in conjunction with the United We Ride National Leadership Forum on Human Service Transportation Coordination. The Forum was sponsored by the federal departments of Transportation, Health and Human Services, Labor and Education as part of a multi-agency federal initiative that encourages the coordination of human service transportation.

North Carolina has long been recognized as having one of the finest coordinated transportation systems in the country and was one of only five states to receive the prestigious award. This distinction was brought about by more than 25 years of intensive communication and collaboration in North Carolina on human service transportation issues between the state DHHS and DOT.



The United We Ride State Leadership Award was presented Feb. 25 in Washington, D.C., at the Dirksen Senate Office Building to, left to right, Andy Wilson, N.C. Division of Medical Assistance; Charles Glover, N.C. Department of Transportation; Kathy McGehee, N.C. Department of Health and Human Services; Phyllis Stewart, N.C. Division of Aging; and Miriam Perry, N.C. DOT; by Transportation Secretary Norman Y. Mineta and Federal Transit Administrator Jennifer L. Dorn, far right.

Miriam Perry, director of DOT's Public Transportation Division (PTD), accepted the award on behalf of the North Carolina delegation, which included: Charles Glover (DOT- PTD), Kathy McGehee (DHHS Administration), Andy Wilson (Division of Medical Assistance) and Phyllis Stewart (Division of Aging). Other states awarded for their successful coordination efforts were Florida, Maryland, Ohio and Washington.

Gus, continued from page 1

Good Citizen Test, which stresses responsible ownership for handlers and good manners for dogs, as well as an additional "Say Hello" test. The Canine Good Citizen test analyzes how well a dog will accept a friendly stranger, sit politely for petting, and react to distractions and eight other similar tasks. The Therapy Dog International "Say Hello" test examines "the willingness to visit a person and to be made accessible for petting."

Gus passed his Canine Good Citizen Test in July 2003 and the Therapy Dog International Test in August. "We worked hard just about every night for a year," Deborah said.

After Gus was certified, Deborah called WakeMed Hospital and applied to participate in its Hospitality Pets Program. Dogs involved in the program must complete a behavioral and medical screening. After completing the lengthy application process, Gus and Deborah began visiting patients shortly before Christmas. They now visit the hospital each Wednesday evening to see patients in the pediatric ward and in parts of the general hospital.

Deborah said the experience has been rewarding and that each week Gus gets more excited to visit the hospital. "The patients just brighten," she said. "For a few minutes of the day, they forget about being sick."

Contributed by Ashley Duncan

TRIP Team presents report

Secretary Carmen Hooker Odom announced last fiscal year that transportation would be a priority for the department and instructed all of the DHHS divisions to evaluate opportunities for improving and expanding the delivery of human service transportation services at the state and local levels. This positive recognition of the vital role that transportation plays toward the provision of human services is a major benefit for state and local coordination efforts.

The Transportation Report Information Project (TRIP) Team, established in late 2002, was asked by Secretary Hooker Odom to develop recommendations for uniform standards, policies and reporting procedures for all DHHS program transportation services. Kathy McGehee, DHHS Transportation Program Administrator, served as project leader for the TRIP Team. The team met monthly and included representation from all of the DHHS divisions/offices that provide client transportation services.

The initial task of the team was to identify the total DHHS transportation expenditures for SFY 2001-02. A "TRIP Grid" was created to identify each program's eligibility requirements, any barriers to the provision of the service, and the amount of state, federal and local funds spent on transportation services during SFY 2001-02.

Three separate subcommittees of the team were created to study best practices, tracking and reporting procedures, and policy issues. Some of the major topics of discussion centered around brokerage systems, safety and risk management, drug and alcohol testing, requirements for coordination and planning between local human service agencies and transit systems, and liability insurance coverage requirements.

"By participating in the TRIP Team project, the members have developed a stronger appreciation for policy and service delivery issues surrounding client transportation services," McGehee said. "They have become passionate leaders and advocates for coordination within their own divisions."

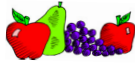
The team presented a comprehensive report to Secretary Hooker Odom in early March. The report includes recommendations for policies and guidance applicable to all state and local agencies that administer DHHS-funded client transportation services. The recommendations target specific requirements for:

- coordination and planning
- agency vehicle purchase approval processes
- tracking and reporting procedures
- contract budgets and invoices

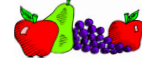
The DHHS TRIP Team project was recently recognized by the Federal Transit Administration as a national best practices model for human service transportation coordination.

"This has been a successful team effort and a long one at that," McGehee said. "The team is to be commended for its hard work, endurance and patience in meeting the project goals. I am very proud of the work produced by the TRIP Team and look forward to the implementation phase, which will include a special focus more on local transportation issues."

An implementation plan is being developed. ■



Stress Awareness Month



Smarter Snacking and Whole Foods

Tasty Tips for Smarter Snacking

Check your HUNGER level

Are you actually hungry? Or are you tired? Bored? Lonely? Happy? Or did you just see a food commercial on TV? If you aren't hungry, skip the snack until you are.

Check your FLUID level

Are you thirsty rather than hungry? Since it's easy to confuse the signals for hunger and thirst, try drinking a refreshing glass of water before you dig into a snack.

Check PORTION SIZES

Most super-sized snacks are loaded with fat, sugar and calories. If you want a sweet or salty treat, start with a small size or share a biggie size with a friend.

Check food labels and FACTS

What you don't know can come as a surprise to your waistline! 300+ calories in a nutrition bar? 400+ calories in a latte! 600+ calories in a fancy cinnamon bun?

Pay ATTENTION to your snack

It's easy to overeat (and still not feel satisfied) if you eat while driving, reading or watching TV. Slow down and enjoy your snack; you'll eat less and enjoy it more.

Pay attention to PROTEIN

Many snack foods are low in protein, as well as high in sugar and fat. Foods with protein (meat, dairy, nuts and soy) provide more nutrients and longer staying power.

Grab some NUTS

A small handful of nuts (about an ounce) can satisfy your craving for something salty and provide some super nutrition (vitamins, minerals and protein) at the same time.

Grab some VEGETABLES

Nature's fast food makes an excellent on-the-run snack. Keep sliced vegetables ready to go in the fridge and fill up a small bag whenever you head out the door.

Grab some FRUIT

Feeling like something sweet and flavorful? Fresh, dried or canned - fruit is a luscious treat anytime of day. Keep several single-serve fruit choices at home and at the office.

Grab a POWER DRINK

Soft drinks offer little except excess calories and caffeine! Looking for some liquid energy? Try low-fat or fat-free milk and build some beautiful bones and teeth too!

Whole Foods for Whole Body Health

WHOLE FOODS are a whole lot healthier. Many of the nutrition problems in the U.S. are related to our over-consumption of highly processed foods and snacks. Dietary supplements can provide some nutrition insurance, but whole foods offer great taste and the natural nutrient bundles necessary for overall health. The good nutrition news is that you can enjoy cooking convenience without giving up your favorite foods. All you have to do is make more whole food choices every day.

WHOLE FOODS are naturally rich in nutrients.

Whole foods come from every food group. Whole grains offer wholesome energy, fiber and a long list of vitamins and minerals (www.wheatfoods.org). Produce provides disease-fighting phytonutrients (<http://aboutproduce.com/>). Dairy foods build bones and teeth with protein, calcium and vitamins (www.3aday.org/). Meats, like lean beef and pork, add Z.I.P. (zinc, iron and protein) to your plate (www.beefitswhatsfordinner.com/ and www.otherwhitemeat.com/).

WHOLE FOODS are lower in trans-fatty acids. In July 2003, the Food and Drug Administration announced plans to require nutrition labeling of trans-fatty acids on all foods and supplements. Trans fats, linked to increased risk of coronary heart disease, mostly come from the hydrogenated vegetable oils used in baked and snack foods. Some naturally occurring trans-fats, like CLA in meat and dairy foods, may actually have health benefits (<http://ific.org/proactive/newsroom/release.vtml?id=17762>).

WHOLE FOODS are lower in sodium. The average American consumes over 4,000 milligrams of sodium per day, about 75 percent from processed foods and restaurant meals. The government recommends 2,400 milligrams per day for healthy people and 1,500 milligrams for people with high blood pressure. Whole foods have less sodium than processed foods. Fruits, vegetables and dairy foods help lower blood pressure (www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/dash/new_dash.pdf).

WHOLE FOODS are lower in sugar. Eating and drinking too much sugar can lead to dental problems and weight gain. A recent study showed that kids who drank more than 16 ounces of sweetened beverages per day consumed fewer nutrients and an average of 244 more calories per day. Power drinks (like reduced-fat milk and 100 percent juices) and whole foods (like yogurt and cheese) have more nutrients and less sugar (www.news.cornell.edu/Chronicle/03/7.24.03/sweet_drinks.html).

Adoption Profile

Introducing Ashley...

Ashley is a likable, free-spirited and caring girl who likes to be hugged. She would rather read quietly, listen to music or watch movies than participate in many activities, although she says she would like to play on a softball team.

Ashley is an intelligent young woman who says she'd like to be an interior decorator when she graduates. She is a smart girl, but her teachers say that she is easily influenced by other kids. She attends regular classes at school where she is very gifted in math. She needs help understanding boundaries, building self-esteem, gaining some independence and taking more care with hygiene. Ashley needs to practice showing more respect to adults and other authority figures.



Ashley
b. Jan. 16 1986

A Family for Ashley

A family experienced with raising teenagers and their typical attitudes and problems would be ideal for Ashley. The adoptive parents should be supportive and stable, providing her with clearly set guidelines and consequences. They should be patient, loving and nurturing as they help Ashley through the trying teenage years. (NC #059-1927)

For more information on this child or adoption in general, call NC Kids toll free at 1-877-NCKIDS-1 (1-877-625-4371).